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## Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Save us, O God, for the waters are coming in upon us. We are weary from the struggle, tempted to throw in the towel. But quitting is not an option. Today, fill our lawmakers with the spirit of Your wisdom, guiding their footsteps to a desired destination. Draw near to them and deliver them from evil, for the kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to You. You are our strength and shield and our hearts can faithfully trust in You. Save Your people and bless their inheritance.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, July 31, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to concur in the House message to accompany S. 627, which is the legislative vehicle for the debt limit increase, with the time until 1 p.m. equally divided. At about 1 p.m., the Senate will vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the House message with the Reid amendment.

No matter the outcome of this vote, the message will still be before this body. If there is an agreement that can be met, this is the vehicle that will be used to send it back to the House.

### THE DEBT CEILING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as the clock ticks down to August 2, I want to remind everyone within the sound of my voice what is at stake. At this very moment, millions of seniors across this great country worry that their next Social Security check might not come to them on Wednesday. Middle-class families wonder whether their retirement accounts will be wiped out by an economic collapse brought about by default on this Nation's debt. Active military personnel, including many who are risking their lives for our great Nation, worry whether they will receive their paychecks.

The Associated Press reported that ADM Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited with troops serving in Afghanistan yester-

day. The soldiers Admiral Mullen talked with were not asking about military strategy or how our troop drawdown in Afghanistan would affect them. No, they asked whether they would be paid if Republicans forced the U.S. Government to stop paying its bills. In a region that has been rocked by violence and plagued by suicide bombers this month, they wondered how they would take care of their families if their checks stopped coming next month.

Let me read a little bit of that United Press story that came out yesterday:

A half a world away from Capitol Hill deadlock, the economy and debt crisis are weighing heavily on U.S. troops in Afghanistan. And the top question on their minds Saturday even as bombing rocked the city around them, was one the top U.S. military officer couldn't answer. Will we get paid?

Admiral Mullen went on to say: I don't know the answer to that question.

But either way to those soldiers he said: All of you must continue to work every day.

This is unacceptable. A country as rich and powerful as ours, men and women with bombs going off around them should not worry whether this country will leave them high and dry. This afternoon I ask those who have said they will never compromise on any terms to think about who their stubbornness will hurt: seniors, soldiers, and others.

I have spoken to the Vice President this morning—in fact, a couple of times. He is hopeful—of course, we have to be hopeful—that we are close to an agreement with Republican leaders. The framework of this agreement is based on new ideas and some old ideas. After speaking to Republican Leader MITCH MCCONNELL this morning, we are cautiously optimistic.

There are a number of issues yet to be resolved, and we must understand that. There is no agreement that has been made. We are optimistic that one

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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